

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **8959**



Introduced by **HON. STRIKE B. REVILLA**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

“Justice is guaranteed to all, regardless of economic standing.”

As stated in the Bill of Rights, “No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of the laws.” It further states that “Free access to the courts and quasi-judicial bodies, and adequate legal assistance shall not be denied to any person by reason of poverty.”

Despite these provisions enshrined in our constitution, in reality, justice remains inaccessible to many, particularly to the underprivileged.

One major problem of our justice system is the lack of lawyers providing free legal assistance. On average, a lawyer from the Public Attorney’s Office (PAO), handles more or less 5,000 clients per year. On the contrary, this shortage cannot be attributed to a lack of lawyers for there are at least a thousand new lawyers every year. The real issue is allocation.

This measure seeks to remedy the situation by designating at least one (1) Public Attorney per branch of the Regional Trial Courts, Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts. By doing so, free legal assistance becomes more accessible to those in need, while also lessening the cases handled by lawyers from the Public Attorney’s Office.

In view of the foregoing, immediate consideration and approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


REP. STRIKE B. REVILLA
2nd District, Cavite

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House Bill No. **8959**

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AN ACT
DESIGNATING AT LEAST ONE (1) PUBLIC ATTORNEY PER BRANCH OF THE
REGIONAL TRIAL COURTS, METROPOLITAN TRIAL COURTS, MUNICIPAL
TRIAL COURTS, AND MUNICIPAL CIRCUIT TRIAL COURTS

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SEC. 1. This Act shall be known as the “*Abogado Para sa Lahat Act of 2021*”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – The State shall ensure that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of the laws. The State shall also provide free access to the courts and quasi-judicial bodies and adequate legal assistance shall not be denied to any person by reason of poverty.

The State hereby guarantees that there shall be, at all times, an available lawyer per branch of court that shall provide free and adequate legal service to indigent and under-privileged Filipinos in need of legal assistance.

SEC. 3. *Designation of at least one (1) Public Attorney per Branch of Court.* – Based on the principle that justice is guaranteed for all, there shall be at least one (1) Public Attorney designated per branch of the Regional Trial Courts, Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts.

SEC. 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Public Attorney’s Office (PAO), and other concerned agencies shall promulgate rules and regulations and other issuances as may be necessary to ensure the effective implementation of this Act.

The IRR issued pursuant to this Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

SEC. 5. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be deemed unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 6. *Repealing Clause.* – All Acts, Presidential Decrees, Executive Orders and Administrative Orders, Rules and Regulations, and other such issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 7. *Effectivity* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,